



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
AND ADDICTION SERVICES  
*A HEALTHCARE SERVICE AGENCY*

DANNEL P. MALLOY  
GOVERNOR

PATRICIA A. REHMER, MSN  
COMMISSIONER

## **Testimony by Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Before the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs Committee February 28, 2012**

Good morning Sen. Leone, Rep. Hennessey, and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I am Commissioner Patricia Rehmer from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and I am here this morning to speak to SB 114 An Act Concerning Pretrial Diversionary Programs.

SB 114 is intended to give veterans an option to participate in three diversionary programs that currently exist. Some of these programs were developed specifically for individuals with psychiatric disabilities while others were intended to educate individuals about choices they make and divert those individuals into treatment when necessary.

Currently, if a veteran meets the criteria to participate in these diversion programs, they are accepted. From our conversations with the individuals who put this proposal together they want to make sure that veterans who meet the criteria for these programs will have the option of getting their treatment from the VA or the DVA.

DMHAS has a direct role in providing behavioral health services in the Pretrial Drug Education Program (PDEP) addressed in Section 3. DMHAS wants to make sure that we maintain the integrity of the current DMHAS PDEP services, and as the state's mental health and substance abuse services authority, we support a veterans' choice of services for all three diversionary programs. We have some specific requests as follows.

The DMHAS Jail Diversion program no longer has a role in the Supervised Diversionary Program. We would like to request that the two references to DMHAS be removed from the added text in Section 1 lines 10-14.

In Section 3 subsection (j), we agree with the intent to have the VA and DVA oversee their own programs. We suggest rewording the first sentence to make it clear that DMHAS will only oversee the drug education programs that it administers. Both DMHAS and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, have contracts with providers that understand these deadlines and can meet them. We do not have a contract with the VA nor do we know if they can meet the timelines and have ready access to the treatment options. We would like to suggest the following wording for the first sentence in subsection (j).

*The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services shall develop standards and oversee appropriate drug education programs that it administers to meet the requirements of this section and may contract with service providers to provide such programs.*

We hope to be able to work with the individuals that put this proposal before you with to iron out the other administrative issues. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.